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First Annual Report

—OF THE—

Committee on Genealogy and Heraldry.

To the Historical Society of Southern California:

We, the undersigned, your Committee on Genealogy and Heraldry, hereby submit our first annual report.

We find by the minutes of April 1, 1889, that on motion, a committee was constituted on heraldry and genealogy in accordance with the following resolution:

“Resolved, That a Committee on Genealogy and Heraldry be added to the list of the regular standing committees of the society, and that the President be authorized to appoint two members of the society on the said committee.”

No report was made for the year 1889, as the work was comparatively new to members of the committee; nevertheless, some preliminary work was done, especially in the department of heraldry.

As many do not see the utility of the creation of this department of historical work in our society, we herewith present what we consider some valid reasons for the same. Historical work generally includes the public events of the world, and deals little with even the great personages of its dramas, unless it be to occasionally and briefly present a biography. The reason for this may be what Macaulay terms the “perspective of history.” Regarding time as a picture, individuals would naturally disappear in the dim distance of the receding past before nations, the larger bodies, would vanish.

The study of the history of nations is always recommended for the reason that the coming generations can profit by the history of those past. How often is the history of the ancient Roman republic, with its concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few preceding its downfall, held up as a warning to our American republic to avoid a like fate! If nations can thus receive benefit from the history of nations, why may not individuals likewise receive benefit from the history of individuals, and particularly from the line of their own descent?

The principal cause for the neglect of the study of genealogy and its companion—heraldry—on this continent undoubtedly sprang from the extreme American antipathy to everything English, a strong sentiment created by the Revolution. But of late years there has been a remarkable revulsion of feeling on this point, and everywhere, particularly in the Atlantic States, people are looking up their genealogies. Old bibles are being opened, family papers looked up, public records searched, and even tombstones are carefully scrutinized for a missing date or coat of arms. The number of family histories published in America within the past twenty years reaches into the thousands. Several societies and publishing houses are wholly devoted to this line of research; notable among the former are the Huguenot Society of New York, the New York Genealogical Society, and the Rhode Island Genealogical Society, the last named society having published several large volumes. Joel Munsell's Sons of Albany, N. Y., is one of the oldest publishing houses in this line, Mr. Joel Munsell having been in the business over forty years ago. There are several eastern magazines devoted wholly to genealogical subjects.

Their research has gone not only to American evidence, but they have crossed the Atlantic ocean, and the archives of Great Britain, Holland, Germany and France have yielded rich treasures of knowledge on questions of American genealogy. Already have the names of each and every British immigrant to America previous to the year A. D. 1700 been secured and published, and it is to be hoped that it will not be long before the list will be brought down to the year 1800.

The formation of certain American societies makes genealogical lore valuable. The Order of the Cincinnati was composed at first of the commissioned officers of the Revolutionary army. It is still kept alive by admitting the oldest male heir of each original member. The Society of California Pioneers has founded the Junior Pioneers, admitting thereto only the descendants of its own members. The Grand Army of the Republic, composed solely of Union soldiers of the Rebellion, has a similar organization in the Sons of Veterans, whose name indicates the character of its membership. The Military Order of the Loyal Legion, composed only of commissioned officers of the Union army in the Rebellion, has rules in this regard, similar to the Order of the Cincinnati.

The study of genealogy is not only a pleasing gratification of a laudable curiosity, but it is an incentive to patriotism, and increases family love and pride and veneration for our ancestors, and thus, as Macaulay says, entitles us to the respect and remembrance of

our posterity. Who is there among us who will not feel more firmly bound to his country if he knows that he had a great-grandfather who fought in the Revolution, a grandfather who bore arms in 1812, and a father who went to the front in the Rebellion? Already through the brief investigations of this committee, not only have long-separated branches of families been pleasantly reunited but communication has been re-established between other branches who had lost all trace of each other for nearly two hundred years.

There is another, and perhaps the greatest, benefit to be derived from a careful study of genealogy, and that is a revival of the science of stirpiculture. Application being made to a famous horse-breeder of Kentucky for some information about his ancestry, he replied, "Why I know more about the pedigree of my horses than I do of my own," As if the genus *homo* is of less importance than the genus *equus*! If "a sound mind dwells in a sound body," and the lower grades of the animal kingdom can be bred to such high degrees of physical superiority, reason urges that man, standing at the head of the animal kingdom, can likewise receive the benefit of the same laws, not applied with Spartan heroism but rationally and conservatively. The revival of physical training in our schools is certainly a step in that direction, and a right one, and, surely, if one knows the physical virtues and vices of his ancestors, he can at least direct the stream of his descent, so as, in a measure, to preserve the one and lose some of the other. These ideas are certainly in accord with those of many learned writers on hygiene. Who knows but that here in America, where there is a grand re-mingling of the blood of the Aryan family—Kelts, Teutons, Slavs, Latins and Greeks—there will yet be produced, by observance of these scientific laws, a grander grade of manhood than that of which our remote ancestors boasted upon the uplands of Asia?

Nor is the art of heraldry to be despised. It is of the greatest assistance in the study of genealogy. The following is condensed from the London Encyclopedia as explanatory on the subject:

Armorial ensigns are hereditary marks of honor made up of fixed and determined colors and figures, sometimes bestowed by sovereign princes as a reward for military valor or eminent public services. They also serve to denote the descent and alliance of the bearer, or to distinguish cities, societies, etc., whether civil, military or ecclesiastical. Arms were first used by commanders in war to distinguish their persons to their friends and followers. Homer, Ovid and Virgil relate that their heroes had divers figures

on their shields whereby their persons were distinctly known. The same is true of our American Indians.

The origin of heraldry as an art must be referred to the times of Charlemagne and Frederick Barbarossa, since it commenced and increased under the feudal system. The hereditary arms of families did not begin till toward the close of the fourth century. Coats of arms first originated in the German tournaments, being a sort of livery made up of several lists (strips), fillets (threads or cords), or narrow pieces of stuff of various colors, whence came the *fess*, the *bend* and the *pale*, indicating the manner in which those bands were originally worn; these being the most ancient charges of family arms, since those who had never been at tournaments wore no such marks of distinction.

The adventurers who enlisted in the crusades also assumed several new figures formerly unknown in armorial ensigns, such as allerions, bezants, escallop-shells, martlets, etc., but more particularly crosses of different colors and shapes, of which there are at least twenty-two varieties.

The introduction of armorial bearings into England is referred to the second crusade in A. D. 1147. About 1189 the arms were usually depicted upon a small escutcheon and worn at the belt. King Richard I is the earliest instance of their being borne upon an ordinary shield, though they are found on seals of the seventh and eighth centuries. Heraldry, like most human inventions, was introduced and established gradually, and, after having been rude and unsettled for many ages, it was at least methodized and fixed by the crusades and tournaments.

These marks are called arms because they were worn by military men at war or tournaments. They are also called coats of arms because they were formerly worked upon coats worn over armor. There are nine different kinds, viz., arms of

1. Dominion, borne by emperors, kings and states. Under this head come the arms of the United States of America and of the State of California, although it must be admitted that the latter was not constructed with any regard to the rules of heraldry.
2. Pretention, of a political division claimed by a king, etc.
3. Concession, given by princes as a great reward.
4. Community, of cities, societies, etc. The arms of the city of Los Angeles are *argent* charged with a bunch of mission grapes *proper*. Our historical society, not yet having incorporated,* has selected no seal, and it is to be hoped that when it does that some attention will be given to the laws governing the same.

*Incorporated February 13, 1891, and selected for its seal, the arms of the United States quartered with Spain and Mexico: significant of the three countries which have successively ruled Southern California.

The seal should have the two striking characteristics of simplicity and appropriateness.

5. Patronage, such arms of states, manors, etc., as the governors, etc., add to their own.

6. Family, belonging exclusively to certain families which none others have the right to assume. In Great Britain, violations of this law did render all articles bearing arms of families, and owned by persons not entitled to wear them, subject to seizure and confiscation by the earl marshal. Under the British law of primogeniture only the oldest male heir is allowed to use the full coat of arms of his ancestors together with the supporters, crest, and motto. The other male heirs may use the same but it must be charged with a difference, as a label, crescent, etc., of which there are some thirty-six distinguishing "marks of cadency," as they are called. The female heirs and their descendants are entitled only to the shield, and this must be of a lozenge shape for the female, but this is not held under the Scotch law.

There are many families in Southern California, who, by right of descent, are entitled to coats of arms, and this committee would like to hear from all such, and receive copies of their coats and lineage.

7. Alliance, added by marriage and quartered.

8. Succession, added by inheritance and quartered.

9. Assumptive, "taken by caprice," says the above named authority, and, it might be added, without regard to "rhyme or reason." America, with all of its democracy of sentiment, is, perhaps, more cursed with arms assumptive than any other country. Where persons of no intellectual education and of obscure descent, become financially independent, their first impulse is to assume a coat of arms. Generally a book on peerage is consulted, and if a family is found of the same name, whether related or not, their coat is at once dishonestly assumed, and blazoned on house, plate, carriage, lodge and livery; or a jeweler is employed, who does the stealing by proxy or constructs a coat out of his own mind without regard to heraldic laws. As a consequence some funny things happen, as on the façades of several prominent residences in this city there are coats of arms charged with a bend sinister. The bend sinister is a sign of illegitimate descent, which the wealthy owners, perhaps both ignorantly and innocently, publish to the world.

We think it should be laid down as one of the cardinal rules of this society that no coat of arms should be recorded in our archives until the right of the claimant thereto has been fully established.

The number and names of genealogies filed by your committee the past year (1890) in your archives have been:

1. The Weir family genealogy.
2. The descent of George Butler Griffin from Jesse De Forrest, the founder of New York.
3. The descent of Charles Putnam Fenner from John Putnam.
4. Joshua Stephens' Family History.
5. Clippings from the Richmond, Va., Critic.
6. Family History of Hon. William Vandever.

We invite all the members of the society to prepare and file with us their respective genealogies, and as many others as can be obtained.

Respectfully submitted,

B. A. CECIL-STEPHENS, *Chairman.*
GEO. BUTLER GRIFFIN,
M. C. WESTBROOK,

LOS ANGELES, January 5, 1891.

Committee.

